BBC

DOCTOR WHO

MARCUS SEDGWICK

THE SPEAR OF DESTINY

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About Marcus Sedgwick

Marcus Sedgwick was born and raised in east Kent in the south-east of England. He now divides his time between a small village near Cambridge and the French Alps.

Alongside a sixteen-year career in publishing he established himself as a widely admired writer of YA fiction: he is the winner of many prizes, most notably the Branford Boase Award for a debut

novel (*Floodland*) and the Booktrust Teenage Prize (*My Swordhand is Singing*). His books have been shortlisted for over thirty other awards, including the Carnegie Medal (four times), the Edgar Allan Poe Award (twice) and the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize (four times).

He has written over twenty books – his latest title in the UK is for younger readers: *Monster Mountains*, book two of the Elf Girl and Raven Boy series.

Marcus was Writer in Residence at Bath Spa University for three years, and has taught creative

writing at Arvon and Ty Newydd. He is currently working on film and other graphic novels with his brother, Julian, as well as a graphic novel with Thomas Taylor. He has judged numerous books

awards, including the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize and the Costa Book Awards, and regularly

writes reviews for the *Guardian*.

He has illustrated some of his books, and has provided wood-engravings for a couple of private

press books.

His website is www.marcussedgwick.com and you can follow him on Twitter: @marcussedgwick

Books by Marcus Sedgwick

Novels:

Midwinterblood

White Crow

Revolver

The Kiss of Death

Blood Red, Snow White

My Swordhand is Singing

The Foreshadowing

The Dark Flight Down

The Book of Dead Days

The Dark Horse

Witch Hill

Floodland

The Raven Mysteries:

Flood and Fang

Ghosts and Gadgets

Lunatics and Luck

Vampires and Volts

Magic and Mayhem

Diamonds and Doom

The Elf Girl and Raven Boy series:

Fright Forest

Monster Mountains

Scream Sea

1

‘You’re being very mysterious, Doctor.’

The Doctor raised an eyebrow.

‘Let me rephrase that,’ said Jo, stabbing his shoulder with her forefinger. ‘More mysterious than usual.’

The Doctor grappled with the gear-lever of Bessie, the bright-yellow vintage roadster he was so

fond of driving. He frowned. The gearbox answered with the sound of cogs trying to eat each other, but soon lost the fight as the Doctor moved up into third. He smiled, looking ahead along the bustling street of Piccadilly. It was a warm day and the hood of the car was down. A few people stared and pointed at them as they trundled past.

Jo sank a bit further back into her seat as the Doctor waved at a couple of passers-by.

‘You know what I love about London?’ he said, turning to her briefly.

She sighed. ‘I’m sure I can’t guess.’

‘It’s the only city in the universe where you can drive around in a car that’s seventy years old and get away with it.’

‘Who says you’re getting away with it?’ muttered Jo.

The Doctor waved again, and Jo shut her eyes. ‘We couldn’t have taken the Tube, I suppose?’

‘Now come on, my dear. Where’s your sense of style?’

Jo stared, open-mouthed, at the Doctor.

The Doctor was dressed in a green velour smoking jacket over a purple frilly shirt, the collar of which was large enough to sail a small yacht. It was eye-watering fashion, even for 1973, but, in all honesty, it was quite restrained. For the Doctor.

Jo shut her mouth. At least he wasn’t wearing the Inverness cape for once. But she hated it when he didn’t tell her what was going on. ‘Doctor!’ she wailed. ‘Will you please tell me what we’re doing?’

The Doctor turned up Dover Street, scuffled briefly once more with Bessie's gearbox and then

brought the car to a halt at the top of Hay Hill.

'We're going to a museum.'

'You told me that much. A private collection. To look at something?'

'No,' said the Doctor, grinning. 'To steal something.'

2

'I never had you down as an art thief,' said Jo.

They stood looking at the noble frontage of the museum: just one of many magnificent Georgian

three- and four-storeyed houses in Mayfair.

'Not art,' said the Doctor. 'Antiquities.'

'There's something in here that interests you?'

'Right,' said the Doctor. His eyes scoured the building as if he were trying to see through it.

'Something dangerous?'

'Right again.'

'And UNIT sent you here,' said Jo triumphantly.

The Doctor rounded on her. 'My dear girl,' he said. 'UNIT do not *send* me anywhere.'

Jo decided to tease the Doctor a little. 'But you do work for them, don't you,' she said, her eyes twinkling. 'Just like I do.'

The Doctor glared at her. 'I have offered my services to them during my … time here as a scientific adviser, and in a purely unaffiliated manner. I am not employed by them, and if at any time I choose to leave I will do so. Now come on. Let's get inside and have a look at this thing.'

'What thing?' called Jo, but the Doctor was already striding ahead and up the steps.

Maybe now wasn't the time. He did seem to be very preoccupied, and, really, she knew better than

to tease him about working for UNIT, the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce. She also knew better than to remind him that he had only agreed to work for them since he had been exiled to Earth by the High Council of the Time Lords, having been found guilty of violations of time. And, although the High Council had now allowed the Doctor freedom to travel in time and space once again, she

certainly knew better than to mention his exile.

Jo hurried up the steps, out of the bright day and into the cool dark of the museum.

The Doctor had disappeared inside. Fumbling for some money, she bought a ticket from a small

desk in the foyer and pushed through heavy glass doors into the exhibition itself.

Various rooms stretched away in front of her. People wandered around in the dreamy, irritating

way they do in museums. A security guard lifted his head and looked at her. She walked on.

The ticket seller had pushed a leaflet into her hand, and only now did she stop to read the front.

The Hoard of the King

Early Scandinavian treasures recently uncovered in Sweden

Presented by the Moxon Collection

Jo found the Doctor on the second floor of the museum. He was staring through the glass of a

cabinet in the centre of the room. Inside the cabinet was an unbelievably beautiful helmet with a face mask attached. It appeared to be silver and gold, and was polished so fiercely it shone like a small sun under the bright lights.

'Is that what we've come to steal?' whispered Jo as she stepped up beside him.

The Doctor shook his head almost imperceptibly. He nodded through the glass of the cabinet in

which the helmet sat to another, taller, case in the corner of the room. Inside that case was a spear.

Its shaft was simple enough – of wood that had done well to last the best part of two thousand years

– but the head of the spear was another thing of wonder and beauty. Made of a long tapering piece of gold, it too glowed brightly in the beam of a small spotlight.

'Do you see it?' asked the Doctor.

'Can we take a closer look?' whispered Jo.

The room was emptying of people. A guard sat in one corner, almost asleep in her chair.

The Doctor nodded. 'Yes. But don't linger.'

They took a circuit of the room and tried not to dawdle as they passed the spear. Now they were

closer, they could see small markings cut into the flat parts of the golden tip.

'Runes,' said the Doctor. 'In Elder Futhark from the look of them.' He turned to Jo. 'The runic

alphabet of the Norsemen.'

Jo bent to peer through the glass at the gold. 'What does it say?'

'There are no doubt more markings on the other side, but those we can see from here say *Gungnir*.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'It's a name.'

'Of the man who owned it?'

'No. Of the spear itself.'

'The spear has a name?'

The Doctor nodded.

Jo suddenly straightened. ‘Is it a good idea to be seen at the scene of the crime?’ she whispered, glancing over her shoulder.

‘It’s not a crime scene,’ said the Doctor. ‘Yet.’

He winked, allowing himself one more close look at the spearhead, then took Jo by the arm. ‘Time

to go, I think,’ he said, and they headed for the stairs, hurrying down to the ground floor. ‘Did you enjoy the exhibition?’

‘What exhibition? I saw one helmet and one spear.’

Jo smiled brightly at a security guard on the door, who was staring openly at the Doctor’s clothes.

‘Fascinating!’ she declared loudly, and then they emerged from the darkness into the sunshine,

blinking their way back into the modern world.

3

‘We believe that the spear is not all it seems,’ explained the Doctor as they headed back to UNIT

headquarters. ‘There have been a few temporal anomalies in the area.’

‘What kind of anomalies?’ asked Jo.

The Doctor turned Bessie into the drive that led to UNIT, and she chugged happily over the gravel as if eager to be done for the day. It was getting late, the sun starting to dip behind the tall trees that lined their way.

‘Small things. Like several watches all losing time at once; a rash of people getting a feeling of déjà vu; a clock striking thirteen. Small things, so small that they might have gone unnoticed, were it not for the fact the museum is opposite the bridge club of a friend of ours. He told me; I spoke to the Time Lords; and here we are …’

‘And who’s this friend of ours?’

The Doctor smiled. ‘The Brigadier. Ah! There’s the old greyhound now. Shall we make our

report?'

Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart was just walking out of the front doors as they pulled up, tugging his cap on to his head as crisply as ever. He saw Bessie and strode towards them. 'Doctor! Miss Grant!'

'You were quite right, Brigadier. The spear has every indication of being a PTN.'

'A what?' asked Jo, but neither the Doctor nor the Brigadier were listening.

'You've informed the High Council?' asked Lethbridge-Stewart.

'I already have their authority to remove the object for analysis. Immediately.'

'But why not just ask them for it?' said Jo. 'The museum, I mean.'

'We tried,' said the Brigadier. 'They refused. This chap, Moxon, the owner of the collection. Total recluse. Billionaire. Not used to taking orders.'

'But can't you make him?'

'Private collection. We have no power to order him to do anything.'

'But surely if you explain what it's all about …?' Jo asked. She stopped. 'What *is* it all about, anyway? What's a PTN?'

'Physical Temporal Nexus,' said the Doctor. 'Very dangerous things indeed. Their origin is

unknown, but they are certainly alien and certainly ancient. There are believed to be only a few in existence, and the High Council is – how shall we put it? – more than keen to keep them out of

circulation.'

'I see,' said Jo, 'I think. We'd better get on with it then.'

'Well put,' said the Doctor.

They headed into the UNIT building. 'What's the plan?' asked Jo. 'Do you have a nice black

burglar suit in your wardrobe, Doctor? One with frills?'

The Doctor paused briefly, started to raise a wagging finger towards Jo, then thought better of it.

'The museum stands between a bank and an embassy building,' he said. 'Both of which will be well

protected. However, with all due respect to my friends here, this *is* 1973.' He smiled at the Brigadier and then walked on. 'The room in the museum is without CCTV, laser sensors or other motion

detectors. It would be child's play to walk in and out, with a minimum of broken glass, but there are simpler ways of entering and exiting a building without being noticed …'

They'd stopped by a certain familiar police box. The Doctor patted the side of the TARDIS. '… if

you have one of these.'

Jo laughed.

'What is it?' asked the Brigadier.

'I just realised,' she said. 'Banks. Safety-deposit vaults. Museums. Art galleries. You could get very rich in a week with this.'

'Some of us have nobler aspirations,' said the Doctor sternly.

'Oh, me too, me too,' said Jo, grinning. 'Really noble. The noblest. It was just an idea. So, we

materialise in the room on the second floor of the museum, smash the case, grab the spear and

dematerialise again, yes?'

'Not quite,' said the Doctor. 'If I may make one small adjustment to your otherwise excellent plan, Jo? I took the trouble of getting the UNIT boffins to prepare this.'

He stepped inside the TARDIS and reappeared a moment later with a spear that looked just like the one they were going to steal – with one small difference.

'It has no runes on it,' said Jo.

'Quite so,' said the Doctor. 'We made this from photographs in the

exhibition catalogue, but the

runes were unclear – hence the need for our visit today. As soon as we complete the work on the

spearhead, we can be off. Later tonight, I hope.'

'And we replace the spear with this copy!' said Jo. 'That's brilliant. They won't even know

they've been robbed!'

The Doctor smiled. 'Well, as long as we don't break any glass, they won't.'

4

'Well, here we are!' announced the Doctor. 'Second-floor exhibition room of the Moxon Collection.

Voilà!'

He threw the TARDIS door open theatrically, smiling broadly at Jo, who frowned and gave a little

prod of her finger to the air, pointing outside.

The Doctor turned. 'Blast!' he said loudly, then more quietly, 'Couldn't you land where you're

supposed to, old girl? Just once?'

Jo peered out and surveyed the view. 'We appear to be on a roof. The roof of the museum actually.

Not bad.'

'Well, really,' said the Doctor.

Outside was the night skyline of London. They could see the lights of Piccadilly Circus and, a little further on, Nelson's Column striking up into the darkness.

'Fair enough!' declared the Doctor. 'It is still only 1973, after all. We can slip inside from up here just as easily.' He fished in his pocket and pulled out the sonic screwdriver. 'There must be some kind of skylight for access to the roof,' he added.

Jo tugged his sleeve. ‘There. Look.’

‘Excellent,’ said the Doctor. ‘Jo, would you mind bringing our decoy?’

A short way away on the roof of the building was a small door leading into the roof space. The

Doctor held the sonic screwdriver against the lock for no more than a second, and the lock clicked open.

They made their way down a cramped, darkened stairwell. At the bottom was another, larger door.

Once more, the screwdriver did its work, and they were into the museum itself.

‘One floor down,’ said the Doctor quietly. ‘Keep your ears open. Just in case.’

Jo nodded, clutched the fake spear a little more tightly, and they started down the stairs, which were wide and thick with plush carpet.

Near the bottom of the staircase, the Doctor paused, then pointed to the door to the room they’d

visited that afternoon. He stood still on the bottom step, tense, listening hard. Then he relaxed and smiled. ‘Well,’ he said. ‘I think the coast is clear.’

He stepped down on to the landing and the wail of an alarm broke upon them, deafening and shrill.

Footsteps rang out across the marble tiles of the ground floor and then, much closer, a voice

shouted at them. ‘Stay exactly where you are or I’ll fire!’

They spun round to see a guard levelling a pistol at them – not one of the dozy security guards from their afternoon visit but one dressed in almost military uniform, adopting a stance as if he meant to shoot at any second.

‘What do you mean, you’ll fire?’ roared the Doctor. ‘Don’t be preposterous! This is a museum, not a rifle range!’

He turned to Jo. ‘Come on. I think we should leave.’

‘Do not move!’ bawled the guard. There was the sound of more guards running up the stairs, and

the Doctor grabbed Jo’s hand.

‘I’ll shoot!’ shouted the guard.

‘He won’t,’ said the Doctor with great certainty, taking a step back up the stairs.

The wall behind their heads exploded in a mess of plaster that seemed to reach them before they

were aware of the gunshot itself.

‘Run!’ cried the Doctor, and they sped back up the stairs, heading for the roof. More gunshots

sounded and the wall above their heads erupted as they ran, crouching, for the door to the small

stairwell.

The pistol fire was suddenly overwhelmed by the harsh metal sputter of a sub-machine gun.

‘Preposterous!’ cried the Doctor as they took the metal stairs to the roof two at a time. There were more shouts and the sound of boots ringing on the stairs clattered after them.

Shots pinged off the ceiling as they ducked out of the tiny door and back into the cold night air.

‘Into the TARDIS, Jo!’ shouted the Doctor. ‘Quick!’

They burst inside and flung the door shut. The Doctor pounced on the central console and locked

them safely inside. The distant sound of gunfire breaking on the outside of the TARDIS came to them, like bees pinging off the glass of a thick window.

‘Let’s not outstay our welcome,’ said the Doctor, busily setting co-ordinates.

‘I’d say we already have,’ said Jo. She set the spear beside the door and rushed over to the Doctor.

The sound of gunfire was replaced by the familiar grinding sound of dematerialisation, and Jo felt relief rush over her. She turned round and perched on the edge of the console.

'Yes, that was rather close,' said the Doctor. 'Still, it proves one thing.'

'Which is?'

'That the spear is something unusual. No one would go to such lengths to protect it if it was just an old piece of wood and a lump of gold.'

'Maybe Moxon is just very protective of his collection.'

'Sub-machine guns? That's taking museum curation a bit far, don't you think?'

'I suppose so,' said Jo. 'Anyway, where are we going?'

The Doctor smiled. 'A very good question.'

'With a very good answer, I hope.'

'We can't steal the spear *now*, but we can steal it in the past. We are therefore travelling back to its only other confirmed location in space–time.'

'Which is?'

'Didn't you read the notice by the case?'

Jo shook her head. 'Too busy trying to understand Futhark.'

'Well, do you still have the leaflet from the museum?'

Jo fished in her back pocket and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. She found the short

description of the spear.

Ceremonial spear. Found in Gamla Uppsala, Sweden. Believed to have been used in festivals

around the vernal equinox, second century AD. Inscription upon the head reads GUNGNIR. In

Norse mythology, Gungnir was the magical spear of Odin.

‘You’re taking us to see the Vikings?’ asked Jo incredulously.

‘I know! Wonderful, isn’t it?’ said the Doctor with a grin.

‘That’s not the word I’d use,’ Jo said. ‘Hey, wait a minute, how do you know where to go?’

‘ *Where* is easy,’ said the Doctor. ‘Just look at your leaflet. Uppsala, central Sweden. Or Old Uppsala to be exact. Centre of power of Swedish kings for over a thousand years till the Christians turned up. That’s *where*. *When* is a little harder. We know we should head for the spring equinox …

Nice of the Vikings to date things around astronomical phenomena. Makes life so much easier.’

‘But in which year?’

‘Well, there I’m guessing a little. In the British Museum there is a rune stone that bears the only other known reference to Gungnir. It refers to a ceremony in Old Uppsala and mentions the passing of a second sun across the heavens. Scholars have always assumed that to be a reference to Halley’s

Comet, whose *only* known appearance in the second century was in 141 AD – according to the old Julian calendar that was on the twenty-second of March, the very next day after the equinox. So that’s when, and where, we’re going.’

‘Oh,’ said Jo. ‘I see.’

‘Good.’

‘I have just one question.’

‘Fire away!’

‘Oh, Doctor, please. Not after that business at the museum.’

The Doctor held up his hand. ‘Sorry. What’s your question?’

Jo swallowed. ‘So, listen. This spear. The magical spear of Odin. I might have got this wrong, but wasn’t Odin a god?’

‘That’s what they say.’

‘Well, doesn’t that worry you at all?’

‘On the contrary. Rather fun, I’d say.’

‘Fun?’ asked Jo, eyeing the spear by the doorway nervously. ‘Do you really think the owner of

Gungnir was a god?’

The Doctor smiled again. ‘I suppose,’ he said, ‘that we’re about to find out.’

5

With an almighty groaning the central column of the TARDIS came to rest. They had landed.

‘Of course, the Vikings are much misunderstood.’

‘Is that right?’ asked Jo.

‘Come on, you must have done some history at school.’

‘Doctor, we did the Romans. Every year. Ask me about the Punic Wars and I’m your girl.’

‘Some other time maybe,’ said the Doctor. ‘The point is that people often see the Vikings as violent marauders and nothing else, when the truth of the matter is that by and large they were farmers,

fishermen.’

‘By and large …?’

‘They were great explorers, too. They discovered North America five hundred years before

Columbus thought he had. They got as far as the Mediterranean, Russia. You have to remember that

most accounts of the Vikings are written by the Christians who displaced them. Somewhat biased

accounts.’

‘You know this for a fact?’

The Doctor gave Jo a hurt look. ‘What I do know *for a fact* is that they’re the only humans ever to name a day of the week after

bathtime. Washing once a week was pretty advanced stuff two thousand years ago.'

Jo laughed.

'Well,' said the Doctor. 'Shall we look around?'

Jo nodded. 'Let's.'

The Doctor brought up the outside view on the TARDIS's scanner screen. They were treated to the

sight of a peaceful forest, with snow deep on the ground and thick on the branches of the trees,

although it appeared to be a bright and sunny day otherwise.

'Seems quiet enough,' said the Doctor.

He shut down the screen, opened the door and they headed out.

'Cold,' said Jo.

'Will you be warm enough?' asked the Doctor. 'I could always fetch my Inverness cape for you?'

'I'll be fine,' said Jo hurriedly. She shot a quick smile at the Doctor so as not to hurt his feelings.

Their feet crunched noisily into the snow, which was frozen hard.

'Which way do we go?' asked Jo.

'I'm not sure,' said the Doctor. 'Let's circle around. It can't be far. There should be a large temple complex. And a village serving it.'

Jo stopped and looked back over her shoulder. 'Will the TARDIS be all right?'

'She's tougher than I am,' said the Doctor seriously. 'And, anyway, I have a theory.'

'Yes?'

'Yes. You see, the whole nature, shape and even the modern blue pigment of the TARDIS is so

deeply unfamiliar to the primitive mind that, although the optic nerve registers its presence, the brain cannot decode what it is seeing. The primitive visual cortex is unable to relay information about it consciously to the viewer. In effect, even though her chameleon circuit is still damaged, she's as good as invisible. She'll be just fine.'

'That's remarkable,' said Jo.

'She is a remarkable old girl in many ways,' said the Doctor. 'Let's move, shall we? We'll be

warmer if we walk a little faster.'

They made their way deeper into the forest. As long as there wasn't another snowfall it would be

easy enough to find their way back to the TARDIS from the trail of their footprints in the snow.

The woodland was on sloping land, and they headed gently downhill through a mixture of birch and

ash and conifers until, finally, they saw the trees thinning out a little in front of them.

'I hear a river somewhere,' said Jo.

'Yes,' said the Doctor, nodding. 'That way.'

Very soon they glimpsed clear green water flowing rapidly in a wide and strong river, whose

banks were covered with snow and ice.

'This way,' said the Doctor.

'How do you know?'

'Because rivers mean settlements sooner or later.'

'Sooner, I hope. I'm freezing.'

'I could still go back for my cape …'

'Look, Doctor! What's that?'

Jo pointed downstream to the opposite bank, where there was a huge

wooden construction. As they

moved closer, they saw what it was – a vast waterwheel fed by a channel from the river. Then they saw that beyond it was another one, exactly the same, and beyond that, more – six of them in total –

and all drawing water from the channel underneath the heavy wooden wheels, which turned slowly

but with a power that was somehow threatening.

'Fascinating.'

'Is there a way across?'

'Let's head downstream. Maybe there's a bridge. I wouldn't want to cross that river, even on a

summer's day.'

The river was deep and moved in eddying currents. Ice crusted its banks, and even looking at it

seemed to sap the warmth from Jo's blood. She shivered.

As they approached the first of the waterwheels a bridge came into view beyond it, but before they could get any further they heard shouts from across the water and quickly threw themselves in the snow behind some tree stumps on the riverbank.

The Doctor lifted his head. 'It's all right. They haven't seen us.'

'Who?' Jo couldn't hide the worry in her voice.

'There's a group of men on the other side, beyond the wheels.' The Doctor took another look. 'It's safe, Jo. Have a look.'

Jo peered across the water. 'What's going on?'

'I don't know,' said the Doctor. 'I think there are two groups. They don't seem to like each other.'

Jo saw what he meant. There were definitely two groups of warriors facing off in a clearing

between the waterwheels and the forest. They wore leather and furs: boots up to the knee strapped round with cloth bindings, thick furred

tunics and fur-lined caps.

They were shouting at each other and waving metal – swords and axes. Not actually fighting, but

clearly no love was lost between them, and they appeared to be on the verge of a scuffle at the very least. One man in the left-hand group waved an enormous hammer above his head, roaring like

thunder as he did so.

'Posturing, that's all,' said the Doctor. 'Although …' He hesitated. 'Maybe more to come.'

He was right. Without warning, one of the hammer-man's group charged forward, wielding a war-

axe above his head, screaming.

There was sudden silence from all the other men, a silence into which one voice rang out. It

sounded like a shout of warning, but it came from *behind* the charging man.

He alone ignored it.

And then, whistling through the snow-still air, a spear came from nowhere. A huge throw, an

impossible throw, and the spear stuck into the man's back.

He took one more step and then pitched forward into the snow, as dead as the landscape around

him.

There was silence. No one moved on either side.

'Gungnir?' whispered Jo.

Before the Doctor could answer, the thrower of the spear came into view, walking out of the trees.

It was hard to be sure at the distance they were looking from, but the Doctor and Jo could see he was a tall man, taller than the others. He appeared to be older too, with a long beard, but no less powerful for

that.

His own men moved away from him as he approached; their enemies backed away too, heading for

the bridge back across to the side of the river where the Doctor and Jo were hiding.

The spear-thrower walked slowly up to the man he'd killed – his *own* man – and, putting a boot on his back, pulled his spear free. He shouted a word to his men, and they turned to go.

'Oh my –' said Jo, but she didn't finish because hands grabbed her.

She tried to scream, but a hand clamped across her mouth and as she was pulled to her feet she saw the Doctor being grasped by two men, who were dressed like the ones they'd just seen. They dragged him towards the river.

The Doctor struggled to fight his way free, and Jo managed to bite the hand over her mouth. She got a cuff to the back of her head, and her vision swam. As she struggled to stay conscious, Jo saw the Doctor wrench free of one of his attackers and dispatch a firm blow to the man's neck, sending him to his knees.

Then the other man swung at the Doctor, who ducked. The man flailed past him, catching the

Doctor's jacket as he fell. Jo watched in horror as both he and the Doctor tumbled into the fast and icy river, and were swept away.

Jo fainted, and her attacker allowed her to fall limply to the ground.

6

When Jo woke up, the world was upside-down. It also seemed that there was an earthquake in mid-

rumble. It took her a moment to realise that she was hanging, her wrists and ankles tied, over the shoulder of one of the Vikings, and that he was jogging with her through the trees as if she were a paper doll.

The second thing she noticed was the smell. The most terrible stink she'd ever had the misfortune to come across, so bad it made her want to retch. *Must be bathtime tomorrow then*, she thought, wrinkling her

nose.

The third thing she thought was that it was actually terrifying being pressed so close to a hot and sweaty Viking. She could feel the muscles in his shoulder working, pushing into her stomach, and at that point she screamed and tried to wriggle her way off.

Jo thought she heard him laughing, but, either way, his arms tightened round her legs and she knew she was going nowhere.

She could see other men running beside her, though upside-down it was hard to tell how many.

They were silent for the most part, though from time to time one of them would bark a single word that she didn't catch.

And then, finally, she remembered the Doctor.

She'd seen him washed away into the powerful currents of the river, a river so cold there were

plates of ice tumbling along in its waters.

She told herself not to panic. He'd be all right. He always was. Wasn't he?

Apart from those times he'd told her about when he sort of died and then sort of turned into another version of himself.

Another version of himself who might not even know who she was, and here she was almost two

thousand years before she'd been born.

She started to panic.

Get a grip, Josephine, she thought. *Get a grip on yourself.*

He'll be OK.

He'll get out of the river somehow.

He'll see these tracks in the snow and he'll come and find you.

He'll be fine and the TARDIS will be fine because these ignorant savages can't even see it, just like the Doctor said.

From a distance the Doctor watched as a group of about twenty men loaded the TARDIS on to the

back of a large low wagon pulled by four sturdy oxen. Then it trundled away through the trees.

‘Well, it was just a theory,’ he said.

He’d fought with the man in the river for a long time, but finally the poor human had succumbed to the cold and had been washed away to Valhalla.

The Doctor had managed to fish himself out of the river and had stood dripping on the riverbank,

but within minutes the water had begun to freeze, threatening to turn him into a living ice sculpture.

The cold didn’t worry him unduly. Given that his normal body temperature was way below human

levels, the dip in the river had been no more than refreshing, certainly not deadly.

But it was a nuisance being damp and icy, so he began to walk briskly back along the bank, trying to pick up Jo’s trail. One of the advantages of having a binary vascular system was that he could always pump his blood faster than normal if he chose to, raising his body temperature at will. Very soon his clothes were steaming as he walked along, and in twenty minutes he was as dry as a good

martini.

‘As I always say,’ he said, ‘two hearts are better than one.’

He soon came back in sight of the waterwheels and the bridge, and hesitated for a moment. He had

to find Jo. But something wasn’t right about these waterwheels, and he knew he should investigate.

He hesitated a little longer. The most important thing was to find the spear. But then there was Jo.

Jo Grant. Loyal, funny, quick-witted Jo. If anything happened to her

… He'd had other companions

before, of course, and all wonderful people, in the various weird ways humans could be, but none of them was quite like Jo …

'Five minutes,' he said to himself.

A quick look at the waterwheels and then find Jo. If they'd wanted to kill her she'd be dead

already, and five minutes wouldn't help that.

He crossed the bridge to the far side of the river, and as he approached the closest waterwheel he saw something in the distance they'd missed before.

Through the forest, up and away on a hill, was a clearing, and in the clearing stood a wooden

temple, towering and vast.

He felt a strong urge to go and take a look; even from this distance and looking through the trees he could see it was covered in fantastic carvings that he longed to examine, but Jo had been taken the other way, and there were the wheels, and the spear, and …

He hurried on.

There was no one in sight, but he approached the first waterwheel cautiously – being shot at and

dunked in a river was quite enough fun for one day.

The wheel was a heavy undershot device: a long wooden leat channelled water from the river to

the bottom of its fins, which turned constantly in the flow.

He moved on to the next wheel, and the next, and now, in the far distance, he heard the sounds of axes and saws, of wood being chopped in the forest. He squinted towards the direction of the sounds and watched as part of the forest trembled, and then a gap appeared in the canopy as a tree came

down.

'They're making more …' he said, wondering why they needed all

these wheels, all this potential

power – power that was useless unless it was feeding something.

But what?

The axle of each waterwheel entered a wheelhouse, and the Doctor approached the nearest one.

The door was locked; a big iron keyhole was set into the heavy wood.

The Doctor pulled his sonic screwdriver out of his pocket and, once inside, his eyes widened.

There was no primitive set of cogs and drive-shafts, no trip-hammers or cam-wheels. No milling

or grinding stones. Instead, the axle of the wheel went straight into a large metal box, from which heavy-duty electrical cable emerged and then disappeared into the dirt floor of the wheelhouse.

Neither the cable nor the box looked like they had anything to do with Earth in the second century AD.

It was as he'd left the wheelhouse that he'd heard the snort of an ox from across the river, and that was when he'd seen the TARDIS being towed away.

The Doctor put his head down and made for the bridge.

'Hang on, Jo,' he said. 'Hang on.'

8

Jo knelt on a hard earth floor.

In front of her stood a huge warrior, his face almost obscured by a thick beard, though his eyes

were clear enough to see and burned down at her, making her want to melt into the ground and

disappear.

Around them were the men who'd brought her, and around *them* was a vast dark hall. A fire-pit at its centre sent smoke curling up into the thatch of the roof.

She'd been carried through a village – a series of small huts and some larger houses – and then

brought before this man, who was evidently the chief.

'I,' announced the man, 'am Njord.'

Jo understood him perfectly. She knew the telepathic circuits of the TARDIS had a certain range,

and, although the Doctor had never said how great that range was, she knew the TARDIS must be

close enough for it to make her hear the ancient Norse dialect as English.

Njord stepped a little closer to Jo and began walking round her. Her wrists and ankles were still bound. She longed to stand and give this old goat a piece of her mind, but she knew she'd most likely fall over if she tried, which wasn't the effect she was after.

Njord grunted in satisfaction. 'Everything is as Frey said.'

'Frey?' asked Jo. 'Who's Frey?'

Njord ignored her. He clapped his hands and gave a short laugh that sounded more like a bark.

Then he stopped in front of Jo and bent down, putting his face right up close to hers.

Her nose wrinkled.

'Where is the Healer?' he said.

'The who?' asked Jo.

'My men say he drowned. He fell in the river. But Frey says not to believe what you see with the

Healer.'

'The Healer? You mean the Doctor?'

'The Healer, the Doctor. Yes. Is he drowned?'

Jo hung her head. 'Oh, I hope not,' she said quietly.

Njord straightened. ‘My men are looking for him. They will find him if he still lives.’

Staring hard at the earth in front of her, Jo fought the urge to weep.

‘You are the Healer’s woman? His wife?’

Jo lifted her head. ‘I am the Doctor’s companion,’ she said proudly, and held Njord’s gaze for as long as she could, until her nerve failed her.

A smile spread slowly over Njord’s face. It was not a nice thing to see. His lips parted and Jo

almost winced when she saw his blackened teeth.

He put his boot on Jo’s shoulder and with a shove sent her to the floor, where she lay on her side, wondering how accurate the Doctor’s lecture about peaceful Viking farmers had been.

Njord stared coolly down at her. ‘Today there was almost a fight. Everything is as Frey said it

would be. Old One-eye killed one of his own to stop the war from starting. He is scared. He is weak.

Full of bluster and noise, yes, but in reality he is weak. And when *Skithblathnir* returns to our shores with Frey at her helm, carrying more warriors to swell our army, we *will* go to war with the Aesir.

And we *will* win.’

Jo lay still, trying to understand everything she had heard, knowing it might be important, knowing it would be good to be able to tell the Doctor everything she’d learned. If only he was still alive.

Hands grabbed her again and dragged her out of the hall and through the village. She saw a wagon

being pulled by four oxen. On the wagon was the TARDIS.

She was about to yell when someone pulled her back so hard the breath was knocked from her.

Before she knew it, she was taken into a small but solid hut, where she was tied to the post that held up the roof, and left to shiver.

Darkness fell, and as Jo's shivers turned to great shudders of cold, she wished she'd taken the Doctor up on the offer of his cape.

It was *that* cold.

She'd lost track of how much time had passed. All she'd heard were the sounds of the village:

footsteps coming and going, the occasional chatter of voices, the clang of metal somewhere and the barking of dogs.

Then there was the scrape of the door opening. Jo looked up, blinking in the light of a burning torch being held by one of the warriors, and saw the Doctor being ushered into the hut. Two more men tied him to the post, so that he and Jo sat back to back on the cold ground. Then the door shut and they were left alone in darkness once more.

'I've just been talking to your friend Njord,' said the Doctor.

'I'm fine,' said Jo. 'Thanks for asking. And how are you?'

'Very well, my dear. Thought I'd find you here somewhere. Are you warm enough?'

'You're joking,' said Jo. 'I'm freezing!'

'Well, sit as close to me as you can. I'll warm us up. Three hearts are better than two, after all.'

In spite of herself, Jo laughed. 'Doctor?' she said. 'Who is Njord? He kept speaking about

someone called Frey, too. I don't think he's here now, though. He's away, fetching warriors on his ship. It had a funny name.'

' *Skithblathnir*.'

'Yes! That's it! How did you know? Gosh, Doctor, have you got a fever? It's like sitting next to a log stove!'

'Well, you did say you were cold. Jo, do you remember we spoke about Odin?'

'What about him?'

‘You know him as a god of Norse mythology, correct?’

‘Yes. There’s Odin, and Thor too. He has a hammer and makes thunder. I think he was Odin’s son.’

‘That’s right. And Odin was supposed to have the spear, Gungnir … and he only had one eye.’

‘Doctor! Njord spoke about someone he called One-eye, like a nickname.’

‘We saw him earlier today, Jo. He killed one of his own men. And there was a man with a hammer,

too.’

‘Thor! But they’re supposed to be gods!’

‘We’ve arrived at a most interesting time. Some scholars, and myself, I might add, have a theory

about certain myths and legends.’

‘A theory, Doctor? Like your one about the TARDIS being invisible …?’

‘Yes, thank you. I think that one might need a bit more consideration. No, this theory is that many stories that scholars of your time believe to be myths, legends and mere tales were, in fact, originally based on real events, and the characters in them based on real people. Even those we now consider to be gods were just great men of the past. Jo, this is so fascinating! We are witnessing the origin of Norse myth!’

‘You’re not serious.’

‘I’m absolutely serious, my dear. Odin is the king of all Sweden. His people are called the Aesir.’

‘Njord spoke about them. He said they’re going to fight them.’

‘Quite so. What we witnessed by the river today was just an early skirmish. Odin had to kill one of his own men to stop the fight from escalating. According to the great Norse sagas, there were two races of gods: the Aesir, ruled by Odin, with his sons Thor and Balder, and the Vanir, ruled by Njord, with the assistance of Frey.’

‘Thank you, Doctor, I’m much warmer now.’

‘What? Oh good. I’ll turn the central heating down.’

‘Thanks,’ said Jo. ‘Go on with your story.’

‘Yes, the Aesir and the Vanir. They had been squabbling for some time, and then they all gathered at a great meeting, an assembly of some kind. Odin grew angry and threw Gungnir over the heads of the Vanir. And so the great war between them began.’

‘You think that’s about to happen?’

‘I think it is, yes. Be that as it may, we have to get Gungnir and get away from here.’

‘Gungnir? Why? You still haven’t told me why it’s *so* important.’

‘I am now absolutely convinced that Gungnir is a Physical Temporal Nexus. A PTN. In the Norse

legends it was said that Gungnir was magical, that it would hit whoever the thrower wished it to hit, without fail. We saw that for ourselves today. That throw was impossible – far too far. But once

thrown, Gungnir cannot miss its target.’

‘Well, that’s pretty neat for a Viking weapon, but still not much of a match for a machine gun. Or a nuclear bomb.’

‘Jo, let me finish. Always hitting its target is nothing to a PTN. That’s just a party trick. But the *way* it does it is the point. In order to perform such a feat a PTN forms a link with the mind of whoever is holding it. At a quantum level the PTN joins with the brain patterns of its owner and then it does a remarkable thing. You are, of course, aware that there are an infinite number of possible universes?’

‘Of course,’ said Jo.

‘I thought so,’ said the Doctor. ‘So what the PTN does is shuffle through all possible states of the universe in a fraction of a second, and it selects the one that its owner desires the most. That is why it is so powerful. So dangerous.’

‘Because whoever owns it can literally make their wishes come true.’

‘Exactly! The High Council of the Time Lords has spent a great deal of time tracking them all

down. One was found on Usurius, two more on Kirith. There are perhaps no more than six in all, and even the Time Lords don't know who made them or where they came from. And, trust me, the Time

Lords know a great deal about the universe. A very great deal.

'So now it seems we have another in our reach. I doubt very much that Odin knows what he has in

his hands – Gungnir's true power. To him it's just a spear with which he seems to hunt rather well ...'

'I can see why they think it's magic, though.'

'Not only that. Another thought occurs to me.'

'Which is?'

'Gungnir is not the only famous spear in history. There is another, even more famous. Or perhaps I mean infamous. As Jesus hung on the cross, a Roman soldier called Longinus wanted to see if he was really dead, and drove his spear into Christ's side.

'That spear became known as the Spear of Destiny, but it soon went missing. We simply don't

know what happened to it. But, despite that, stories about its power began to circulate. It was said that the army that possessed it would be invincible. Not so very long before your own time, Jo,

another man craved the Spear, which by then had turned up in a museum in Vienna. That man was

Adolf Hitler. The very day he invaded Austria in 1938 he drove straight to the museum to capture the Spear. He took it back to Berlin and believed he was, from that time on, invincible.'

'But the Nazis lost the war,' said Jo. 'It didn't work.'

'There are two possibilities. First, some people believe that the spear he captured was a thirteenth-century fake, not the real thing. Or, second, there is a simpler explanation: the spear *was* the real thing, but Hitler made a mistake. In order for a PTN to work, you have to actually *hold* it. Hitler put it in another museum in Berlin and then got on with invading the rest of Europe.'

'My goodness!' said Jo. 'If he'd only known …'

‘Quite so, my dear, quite so.’

‘But wait a minute. What’s this got to do with Gungnir?’

‘Jo, I believe Gungnir and the Spear of Destiny are one and the same.’

‘But we’re in Sweden. How did the Spear end up here?’

‘I told you, the Vikings raided far into the Mediterranean. Odin must have got lucky and found it there.’

‘I see,’ said Jo. ‘That makes sense. But if Hitler had the Spear in the war, how was it dug up in Sweden just now and put in the Moxon Collection in London?’

‘Yes, well, that’s what’s worrying me the most,’ said the Doctor, and his voice sank dark and low.

‘We only have the word of that leaflet that it *was* recently found in a dig in Sweden, don’t we?’

‘You mean the museum was lying? Why would they do that?’

‘Why indeed, Jo? And how do we know that the spear in the museum is not, in fact, another fake?’

‘There were temporal anomalies. Small disturbances in time.’

‘There were indeed. But those can also sometimes be the result of the presence of a poorly

shielded TARDIS.’

‘Doctor?’

‘Jo, this man Frey that Njord spoke about. He has a ship called *Skithblathnir*, yes? Do you know what Norse myth says about *Skithblathnir*?’

Jo shook her head, and suddenly didn’t feel so warm any more.

‘It was said that Frey could make his ship any size he wanted. That he could fit as many men on

board as he wished. Does that sound familiar? A ship that’s bigger on the inside?’

‘Doctor! You think…?’

‘Jo, the name Frey. In Old Norse it means Lord. Or –’

‘Master!’ cried Jo. ‘Frey is the Master!’

Before the Doctor could reply there was a laugh from outside the hut’s door. It was pushed open,

and in he came, laughing and clapping his hands.

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘it’s been such fun listening to you two work it out. Well done! Well done!’

He stood over them, looking down, leering.

The Master.

10

‘You’ve been busy,’ said the Doctor.

The Master stood in the doorway. In his hand he held a burning torch that cast a flickering fiery light across his face.

‘You know,’ said the Doctor. ‘I always thought you looked a little like the Devil with that beard.

Now I know it.’

‘Doctor, Doctor,’ said the Master mockingly. ‘Such a bad loser. Come on now, admit it! You’ve

been plodding around in the dark. Talking of which, the sky tonight will be illuminated most

wonderfully by the comet. You’ll enjoy that.’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘Yes, I see now. You could have just gone to Judea in 33 AD to find the

spear. Taken it right out of Longinus’ hands, no doubt. But that date is not accurate. Calendars have changed and, besides, all we really have to go on are dates made up hundreds of years later by the men who wrote the apocryphal Gospels.’

‘Precisely, Doctor. Whereas here, tonight, the comet marks the

equinox, so neatly recorded on that rune stone in the British Museum. These Vikings are such wonderful people. Do you know they wash

once a week?'

'Could have fooled me,' muttered Jo.

'And now, Doctor, you're here. You join me just as I planned. So nice of you to turn up to order.

Because I need you, Doctor. Or, rather, I need your ship.'

'Something wrong with yours, old boy?'

'Not at all. It's quite well. I've been making lots of trips in it. Finding warriors for Njord. He's most impressed. So is Odin, and that's why I need your TARDIS. I'm giving it to him.'

'And Njord's men have already relieved me of the key, along with my screwdriver. I can guess

what you want in return.'

'Quite right, Doctor. Odin and I have made a bargain. He wants a ship just like mine. And he will get one in return for the Nexus. The Spear of Destiny.'

'But he can't operate the TARDIS.'

'No, but then he doesn't know that, does he?'

'And meanwhile you've set the Aesir and the Vanir at each other's throats, pushing them towards

war, while you've been cooking up your own little plans.'

'Now will you admit how stupid you've been, Doctor?'

The Doctor said nothing, but clenched his jaw and stared at the wall of the hut.

'It gets worse, I'm afraid,' said the Master. 'You see, I've told Odin all about you. Both of you. He was very interested to hear about the Doctor, some sort of magician, or wizard. And his young and attractive assistant. So you're to be made guests of honour. Tonight. At the blessing. In fact you could say you'll be the main attraction.'

He turned to go, then hesitated. ‘I do have a few problems with the Vikings, though,’ he said. ‘I quite clearly told them to put you in different huts. And now here you are together. I’ll send someone to separate you. Miss Grant, Doctor, goodnight.’ And with that he ducked out of the low door and was gone.

‘We have to escape,’ whispered the Doctor.

‘Now?’

‘No, after we’ve been separated. That will buy us some time. If you get free, find the TARDIS. It’s here somewhere. Close by, I’m sure.’

‘But how will I escape? How will you escape for that matter?’

‘I’m more of a thief than you imagine me to be. While I was talking to Njord I pinched a couple of knives. Can you reach my right-hand pocket?’

Jo squirmed and managed to find a knife in the Doctor’s jacket.

‘As long as they don’t search us,’ said the Doctor, ‘we’ll be fine. As soon as you’re tied up again, get yourself free. Find the TARDIS.’

‘And what are you going to do?’

‘I’m going to talk to Odin.’

‘Oh,’ said Jo. ‘Fine. But what’s the big hurry? The Master said we’ll see him tonight, anyway, at the blessing. That doesn’t sound so bad.’

‘Jo, you should know your own language better. A blessing isn’t what you think it is. It comes from an ancient Norse dialect, in which to bless means to sacrifice. We’re to be the sacrifice at tonight’s ceremony.’

11

The Doctor made his way out of Njord’s settlement towards the river and the temple, and, beyond it, Odin’s village.

He moved quietly and, though the night should have been dark with the last quarter of the month’s moon dying overhead, the sky was lit by an eerie glow. Looking up, he saw the comet in the sky and knew how much store the Vikings put against such portents: the perfect moment for Odin to make a

sacrifice to ensure victory in the war that everyone knew was brewing.

He hurried onwards, down the slope, through the trees and across the river. In the gloom, the

waterwheels were still turning on and on, and now the Doctor knew they had some hideous purpose

of the Master's making, but there was no time to stop and investigate. In the distance the lights of Odin's village twinkled, and he pressed on.

As he came towards the hilltop where the temple stood, he stumbled over something. He looked

down. More of that heavy electrical cabling, snaking its way through the trees, and though time was against him he followed it.

It wasn't long before he saw where it was going. It headed into a small tunnel cut into the hillside, right underneath the side of the temple.

He crawled in and, although it should have been totally dark, light came to him. Hand over hand he edged further along the cable and down the tunnel until, suddenly, it opened up into a small man-made cave. At its centre sat another blank metal box, like the one in the wheelhouse, but this one pulsed with lights set in its side, and it seemed to throb from the power within.

Jo had managed to slice through her bonds easily, remarking that Viking table knives were more like lethal weapons than cutlery.

The night was still and the village strangely quiet, although she could hear the sounds of people in various houses as she passed by. She knew where she was going. Since the chameleon circuit of the Doctor's TARDIS was still broken, his ship had to be in a building large enough to house a 1963

police box, and there was only one of those: the hall in which she'd met Njord earlier.

She crept towards it and saw that it was in darkness. She found a door and slipped inside, finding that the central hall was in fact surrounded by corridors and galleries. She began to make her way along the first of these, looking for the familiar shape of the TARDIS.

She turned one corner, and another, but found nothing, and then came to a room where a little of the weak moonlight spilled down from a glassless window set high in the wall.

The light showed her something very beautiful – a large wooden model of a Viking longship,

almost as long as she was tall. It was open-decked, low and sleek, and very finely detailed, and

despite herself she found herself staring at it as if it had some magical attraction that pulled her in.

She reached out a hand to stroke the carved dragon's head that served as the prow, and saw there

was even more detail inside the model: the benches on which the oarsmen would sit, the tiller that controlled the rudder. She couldn't resist the temptation to touch the tiller, and as she did so she gasped, because the thing snapped off in her hand.

'You!' cried a voice in the dark. 'You! What are you doing there?'

Someone was approaching.

She spun round and hastily shoved the small piece of wood in her back pocket, turning a guilty face to a large Norseman glaring at her.

'Oh no,' she said.

'I just tied you up,' said the Viking. He grunted. 'Come with me. Njord and Frey will want to know of your escape.'

The Master laughed.

'Didn't like your quarters, Miss Grant? No matter, I was about to fetch you and the Doctor,

anyway. Sadly, it seems that he has also seen fit to leave us. For the time being only, no doubt. You wouldn't like to tell us where he is, would you?'

'I have no idea,' said Jo, wondering if that were actually true.

'Oh, I doubt that,' said the Master. 'But it needn't matter. His time is very nearly run, no matter what. And you will make just as good a sacrifice as him. Come along. We should be going.'

Two men grabbed Jo.

Njord stepped forward and clapped his hands, and suddenly a host of Viking warriors appeared in

full battle gear.

The Master pointed to the corner of the hall behind Jo. She turned, and there she saw the TARDIS.

The Master slipped the key from his pocket, strode over to the blue police box and opened the

door. He beckoned to Njord, and then he and his men and Jo all followed him inside.

‘I always was a better pilot than the Doctor, you know,’ said the Master, his hands on the controls of the central console as the TARDIS began to dematerialise. ‘I have no idea why he makes such a

fuss.’ A few seconds later they had materialised.

The Master left the console and the press of Viking warriors silently stood to one side to give him access to the door. He sauntered over and opened it. ‘Or maybe she just likes me better than she likes the Doctor, hmm?’

Outside the TARDIS was a vast room, even bigger than Njord’s hall, which seemed to Jo to be like

a church or a cathedral.

The space was full of people and, although a few seemed alarmed by the sudden arrival of the

TARDIS, most seemed unconcerned by it, as if they had seen something similar before.

Jo looked around. There he was. The one-eyed king. The living god. Odin, High King of all

Sweden. He was holding Gungnir and was flanked by his sons. There was Thor with his hammer, and

another man, whom Jo guessed was his younger brother, Balder. Ranks of Odin’s warriors stood on

either side of them, and so the Aesir and the Vanir faced each other.

In between them stood a man alone, dressed from head to foot in a floor-length white robe. In his hands he held a long and wicked-looking knife; he was both the priest and the executioner, ready to make his sacrifice.

'So!' roared Odin. 'You come, Njord, to observe our ancient and noble blessing here in the temple, tonight of all nights.'

Njord stepped forward. 'I do.'

Odin smiled, but there was treachery in that smile. 'And have you, Frey, also come? Have you

come to keep your promises to me?'

Njord flicked his head sideways at the Master questioningly.

The Master nodded. 'I have.'

'What is this?' cried Njord. 'What have you agreed with this man?'

Odin laughed. 'And yet we should still have a sacrifice! Yes!'

There was a roar from his people, and then his men parted as the Doctor was led forward into the

middle of the assembly.

'You, Healer!' declared Odin. 'The owner of the magical ship that is now mine!'

Njord roared, a great cry of betrayal and anger. 'What? What is this?'

He waved to his men, but, before they could react, more of Odin's warriors emerged from the

shadows of the temple and surrounded them, weapons drawn.

'And now, Odin, O great king!' said the Master. 'It is time for you to keep your side of our bargain.

The spear, if you please.'

Again, Odin laughed. 'You foolish little man! I have the ship. And I have the spear. What need have I of you any more?'

The Master's face darkened. 'You! How dare you! You know nothing! You need me. And you will

give me the spear, or I will not show you how to operate the ship.'

'You *will* show me!' Odin shouted. Then his voice dropped to a low, menacing whisper. 'Or I shall kill you, along with the Healer and the woman.'

The Doctor looked at the Master. 'Nice work, old boy,' he said, then turned to Odin. 'Now, look

here, my dear sir, you need to listen to me. You need to listen to me very carefully.'

Odin turned to face the Doctor, surprise and amusement spreading across his face. 'I do? And why

is that?'

'Because this man has betrayed you, just as you have betrayed him. But his betrayal is *far* more potent than yours. Those waterwheels he's had you build. No doubt he told you they would benefit

you in some way?'

Odin's eyes narrowed. He glanced from the Doctor to the Master, who now stood helpless, his

arms held firmly by two of Odin's men.

'He told us it was some great power. Power that would light and heat our houses and halls.'

'And so it will, just not in the way you imagine. What you have created for him is sending power to a box hidden underneath this temple. This device has been storing the power from the wheels for a very long time, and it will explode when he wants it to, at his command. If it does so, it will not only destroy you and everyone here, your temple and your village, but also create a wound in the time

stream, preventing anyone from ever travelling in and out of here ever again. No doubt that was his intention: to steal the spear and cover his tracks.'

Odin stared at the Doctor. 'You are talking nonsense, Healer.'

‘I speak the truth. You may not understand everything I’m telling you, but understand this: Frey has betrayed you! Do not trust him!’

‘Enough of this,’ cried Njord. ‘It is Odin who has betrayed *us*!’

‘No!’ roared Odin. ‘You and Frey have been angling for war from the very start, and you shall

have it!’

He waved Gungnir above his head and seemed about to hurl it at the Vanir.

‘Doctor!’ cried Jo. ‘It’s the start of the war!’

‘Not yet, it isn’t,’ he said. ‘Odin! Aren’t you forgetting something? Shouldn’t you make your

sacrifice for victory before going to war? That must come first, correct?’

Odin wheeled round, his eyes wide with rage, but he lowered his spear as he spoke to the Doctor.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘You are right. You are right … Very well! And which of you shall I sacrifice first?

The traitor, Frey? Or your woman?’

‘No!’ cried the Doctor. ‘You will take me. I give myself to you, upon one condition.’

‘Which is?’

The Doctor waved a hand at the priest. ‘Do not insult me with this man. If I am to be a sacrifice, I request – no, I *demand* – the honour of dying at the hand of the king, and by the power of Gungnir itself!’

‘Doctor! No!’ screamed Jo, fighting but failing to break free of the men who held her.

Odin stared at the Doctor as the seconds ticked by, and then he began to chuckle. He lifted his

spear high above his head and bellowed its name: ‘ *Gungnir!* ’

His shout was taken up by his men, and Odin stepped forward. The

Doctor began to edge

sideways, backing away, backing away. Odin smiled, relishing the game – the cat and mouse, the

hunter and hunted – as the Doctor opened up some distance between them.

‘No!’ cried Jo again. ‘No!’

And then she fell silent, because she saw what the Doctor had done, and where he was now

standing.

Odin pulled back his arm and flung Gungnir with all his might. The spear flew from his hand and

headed straight for the Doctor. It could not miss. It would not.

Jo screamed as she saw the Doctor watch it for a split second. Then he took two neat steps

backwards and pushed through the unlocked door of the TARDIS, disappearing from sight.

The spear hurtled in after him, it too vanishing.

Everyone gasped, and then fell silent.

Nothing and no one moved for three long heartbeats, and then the Doctor stepped out of the

TARDIS, holding the spear.

His voice was deep and strong. ‘You threw the spear that cannot miss, Odin. And you missed. Now

it is my turn.’

He pulled back his arm, then paused and grinned. ‘Or, I can give you Gungnir back on one

condition.’

Odin began to roar his displeasure, but the Doctor again made as if to throw the spear. ‘Are you so sure I will miss, too?’ he asked.

Odin's roar settled into a rumble, and through clenched teeth he hissed, 'What is it that you want, Healer?'

The Doctor turned to Jo and smiled.

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Safely inside, the Doctor closed the door of the TARDIS, and Jo ran to his side. 'We can't leave the spear!' she cried. 'It's more important than I am!'

The Doctor held her by the shoulders. 'My dear girl,' he said. 'That is very noble of you. You were right. Your aspirations *are* the very noblest. But you're wrong about something. Nothing is more important than you.'

'Oh, Doctor. I … But the spear …'

'Yes, the spear,' said the Doctor. 'The spear. But which spear?'

He nodded towards the door of the TARDIS, where the spear was leaning.

'But you just gave that back to him.'

'No, I gave him the copy we were going to leave in the museum. That one is the real one – I hope.

It was all such a rush.'

He winked and Jo burst out laughing. 'That's brilliant!'

'Thank you. One of my better improvisations, I'd say. Bit of a nuisance.'

'But, anyway, why didn't the spear hit you?'

'Temporal grace,' said the Doctor. 'No weapons can function inside the TARDIS – even something

as simple as a spear. Once I was inside, I was safe. It was easy enough to sidestep it and catch it.

Then I simply swapped the spears and walked back out of the old police box.'

Jo smiled. 'And what about the Master?'

‘Oh, well, they’ll find the capacitor I was talking about under the temple, and then they might take me, and the Master, more seriously. But you know him. He’ll talk his way out of it in the end. Though it might take a little longer than usual. The only thing I can’t work out is where his TARDIS is. Or *Skithblathnir*, I should say.’

Jo fell silent.

‘What is it?’ asked the Doctor. ‘Is something wrong?’

‘The Master’s TARDIS. You think he made it look like a Viking ship?’

‘That seems likely. It must be where the legend comes from. It would have made it easier for the

Norse to understand if it looked like one of their own ships.’

‘Oh,’ said Jo. ‘And how big would it be?’

‘Any size at all. Why?’

Jo rummaged in her pocket, looking for the piece of wood from the model that she’d snapped off:

the tiller. Instead, she found a strange metallic device.

‘Doctor, is this something important? I found it. I … well … I broke it.’

The Doctor took it from her, studied it briefly, and then laughed so hard it almost drowned out the sound of the TARDIS materialising at UNIT HQ once more.

‘My dear girl,’ he said. ‘You appear to have removed the dimensional stabiliser from the Master’s TARDIS. He’ll have a hard time travelling without it. Jo, you are quite superb! Even I would be hard put to make a new one.’

‘What, even you, Doctor?’ said Jo, laughing.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘using Viking-age technology – yes.’

And with that he pushed his way out of the TARDIS, and back into the safe warmth of the British

summer in 1973.

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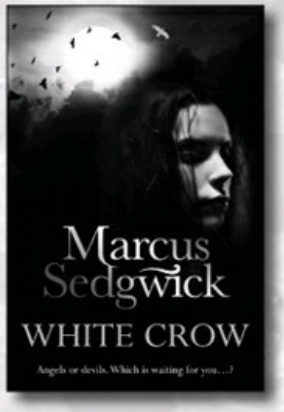

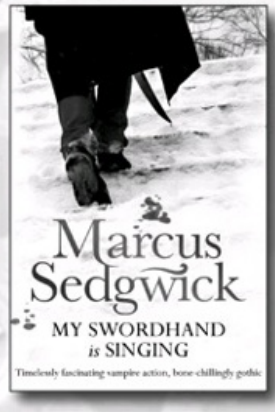

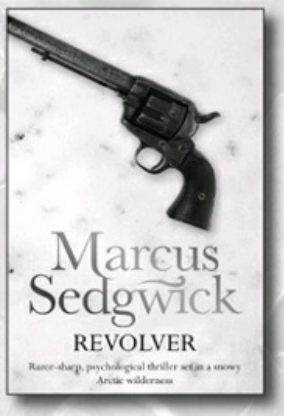

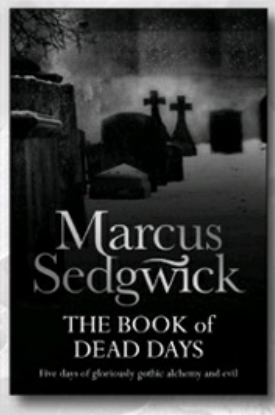

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